LEVEL news

Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Water Levels

PDF Format

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Water Levels for the Great Lakes and Montreal Harbour - *a monthly bulletin from Canadian Hydrographic Service*

About the monthly Water Level bulletin

April Precipitation Over the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term April average:

Great Lakes Basin 86%

Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair) 67%

Lake Superior 105%

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Low Water Level Conditions Continue, But

Water Levels Increase as the Lakes Continue Their Seasonal Rise

Last month's precipitation combined with snowmelt runoff caused monthly mean water levels to increase on all of the Great Lakes from March to April. During the month of April itself, water levels rose 5 cm more than average on Lake Ontario, while levels on the remaining lakes increased 1 to 3 cm less than average.

As indicated in the water level information table, water levels on all lakes remain well below their long-term average and lower than they were at the same time last year. Lake Ontario levels moved a bit closer to average during April. Since levels increased less than average on the other lakes, however, they began May a bit further below average than they were at the beginning of April.

Water levels are expected to continue to rise during May. However, since water levels on each of the lakes declined by much more than average this past fall and winter, it will take greater than average increases this spring to help water levels recover. With little or no snow remaining on the basin to generate further snowmelt runoff, greater than average precipitation will be needed to help fuel this year's seasonal rise.

Great Lakes Water Level Information

	April Monthly Mean Level		Beginning of May Level	
Lake	Compared to Monthly Average (1918-2002)	Compared to One Year Ago	Compared to Beginning-of-Month Average (1918-2002)	Compared to One Year Ago
Superior	20 cm below	6 cm below	20 cm below	9 cm below
Michigan-Huron	61 cm below	24 cm below	61 cm below	28 cm below
St. Clair	32 cm below	21 cm below	34 cm below	22 cm below
Erie	25 cm below	24 cm below	27 cm below	25 cm below

Ontario	16 cm below	26 cm below	15 cm below	28 cm below

Lakes Michigan-Huron 89%

Lake Ontario 68%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

April Outflows From the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term April average:

Lake Superior 91%

Lake Erie 90%

Lake Huron 83%

Lake Ontario 82%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

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Summary information for "LEVEL*news*"

Winter 2002/2003

Environments Canada's Climate Trends and Variations Bulletin (CTVB) puts the most recent season in historical context.

Average temperatures and total precipitation are analyzed with respect to 11 broad climatic-geographic regions. The northern portion of the Great Lakes basin within Canada forms part of the Northeastern Forest Climate Region. The Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Climate Region is made up of the southern portion of the Great Lakes basin and the St. Lawrence River valley.

Temperature

Most of Canada had above normal temperatures this winter (December 2002, January 2003, and February 2003). As a whole, Canada experienced its 9th warmest winter since nationwide records began in 1948. There were six regions, which made it to the CTVB's ten warmest winters table. In contrast, only the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Climate Region made it to the CTVB's ten coolest winters table for this year (10th coolest, 1.0 Celsius degrees below normal).

Precipitation

Overall, Canada experienced slightly drier than normal conditions this winter. The Great Lakes/St. Lawrence was the climate region with its driest winter since nationwide records began, 38.9% below normal. Four other regions also made it to the CVTB's ten driest years table including the Northeastern Forest Region (8th driest, 19.3% below normal). To view the complete CTVB, please visit the website.

Lake Ontario Outflow Strategy

The dry spell on the Great Lakes basin continues. In consideration of the continued low supplies throughout the Great Lakes, the International St. Lawrence River Board of Control's current Lake Ontario outflow strategy is to conserve water on Lake Ontario, as opportunities arise, for critical needs later in the year and within current operational constraints.

The Board continues to closely monitor the conditions on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River and will intervene as required. The Board intends to review its outflow strategy in May during its regularly scheduled monthly teleconference, or before if conditions require. For more information about the Board and its current outflow strategy, please visit the Board's website.

Welcome Back Seasonal Subscribers

LEVELnews would like to welcome back its seasonal subscribers. We hope that you will find LEVELnews and the Monthly Water Levels Bulletin useful sources of information again this year.

Current and past editions of LEVELnews.

Once you've read LEVELnews, be sure to review to the latest Monthly Water Level Bulletin. The Bulletin can be accessed by using its link provided on the LEVELnews website.